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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DJIBOUTI 000337

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FOR A/S NEWMAN FROM AMBASSADOR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: GWOT ASSESSMENT: POLITICAL CLARITY, EDUCATION AND PERSONAL CONTACT

REF: STATE 60775

Classified by: Ambassador Marguerita D. Ragsdale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) A successful effort to prosecute the global anti-terrorism war, especially in countries that already harbor extremists, must proceed on two levels. On one level, the U.S. must create a strategy for framing, implementing, marketing and obtaining support for national political preferences. On a second, it should continue to focus on country-specific plans of action tailored to the needs and characteristics of individual states particularly vulnerable to ideologies and ideas that contravene our own. Working both levels simultaneously would deprive extremism of the destitute, the disenfranchised and the disaffected whom it seeks to use to advance its cause.

2. (S) On both levels, several actions would appear critical:

- Match our actions with our rhetoric;
- Harmonize policies and goals across disparate agencies;
- Clearly articulate our expectations and consistently hold ourselves, our allies and other nations to those expectations;
- Continue the capacity-building dimension of our economic assistance programs and act at the same time to augment projects that provide direct, quick, and visible impact in changing the daily lives of the vulnerable individuals in poor societies;
- Use direct engagement and the popular quest and desire for education as a path to economic prosperity, to reach out to youth in order to encourage stability and promote alternatives to extremism.

National Preferences Clarified

3. (S) The way America is perceived by foreign populations is arguably the most important factor in the global war on terrorism and an indicator of our success or failure to date. Here the focus is image. International perceptions of us rest increasingly on international perceptions of our policies writ large. Our convictions of the rightness of our policies should be backed by a capacity to explain those policies in the most basic terms, both in Washington and abroad. The policies we convey must make sense to those tasked to convey them before they can make sense to those who must hear and understand them. In a world of high-tech communication and literacy capacities that are often weak, clarity is more and more key to making our position heard and understood in an increasingly skeptical world.

4. (S) Yet the appearance of balance in our policies is important for our image as well. If we are to persuade others of our credibility, then we must use our political and economic clout to advance fair and equitable outcomes for international questions in which we are engaged. We are not expected to provide less than that. Problems arise when the content of our policies is seen as inconsistent with actions taken. A resulting sentiment among those we want most to influence would be that the United States only stands up for a cause when the cause is self-serving. This is often prime fuel for competing ideologies and ideals. Those of us in the field cannot be persuasive on a defined policy point if the actions of our nation contradict -- subtly or not -- the very message we are asked to put forward. For our message to be heard and embraced, we must hold other nations, and ourselves, to the standards we set. Similarly, we must hold countries -- whether friend or foe -- accountable for the actions they take. We also must hold ourselves accountable publicly, as we did in the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse cases, when circumstances warrant.

5. (S) Our external policies must also be consistent, without appearance of bias specifically on ethnic, racial, or religious lines. These three sensitive areas will continue to pose the greatest challenge in the image wars for the United States among developing nations. This is due in part to no lack of hesitation by those who oppose us to seek themes that might resonate with the economically disadvantaged. We can effectively challenge these themes through delivery of quick, visible and direct assistance to the most vulnerable populations. Capacity-building and long-term training, while desirable, can only go so far to win American influence if the population does not clearly perceive a tangible and direct benefit of assistance provided. China, for example, has been especially successful in Africa in this regard. In addition, quick impact and direct assistance have become most successful tools for our extremist detractors. For the volume of U.S. assistance given worldwide, approaching some \$ x billion annually, we should demand far greater return of good will from our sizeable investment than we appear to have been able to garner post-September 11.

16. (S) The way we showcase American democratic values is also vital to our success in the global war on terrorism. Our values, which are clear and indisputable, must be seen in our actions on a daily basis and in the choices we make as a nation. The values cannot be perceived as shifting when a course of events is not to our liking. In a similar vein, we must be consistent in our definition of terrorism and of terrorist acts. If the U.S. decries, for example, one action as "terrorism" because it does not suit our purposes, yet tacitly condones a similar action that might be characterized as "terrorism" because it does, our commitments are called into question, especially by our partners and allies. Those who perceive U.S. actions in such a scenario as self-serving, and not for the greater good, are unwilling to commit for the long haul to aid the fight against terror and tyranny. Individuals in a poor or conflict-ridden country must be able to know the value of democracy firsthand. Our assistance to these countries may be the best way to start development of a nation's economy and democratic spirit.

17. (S) For greater outreach specifically in the troubled Islamic world, the U.S. along with its Russian and EU partners, must also use all possible economic and political leverage with the Palestinian Authority and with Israel to bring about on an urgent basis a fair and equitable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This conflict, more than others in the Middle East, has simmered too long and has become an easy, and unfortunately, resonant target for those detractors who portray the U.S. as complicit in the human suffering there. "Fair and equitable" are key words. It appears that a solution would not be considered "fair and equitable" in the Islamic world if it encompassed, for example, a cantoned or disjointed Palestinian entity. In making every effort to assist the Palestinians and Israelis resolve their differences without appearing -- and appearance is primary -- to favor one party or the other, we would swiftly eliminate a major "cause celebre" among some of our fiercest critics in this volatile region of the world. The U.S. image in the Middle East, and in the larger Islamic world, is unlikely to improve over time without our committed engagement to seek a solution that takes into account these concerns.

18. (S) Increasingly important, as pressure on U.S. government resources rises, is the need to translate our democratic ideals into policies at the national level that have been well-coordinated among all agencies in the USG. Without inter-agency coordination, policy standardization cannot be achieved and policy implementation will be haphazard at best. This state of affairs will do little to convey consistency of message across cultural lines.

Country-Specific Tactics Applied Locally

19. (C) Our country team believes person-to-person engagement and popular education are superb approaches to winning the GWOT in Djibouti. The demographics and politics of Djibouti necessitate youth engagement. We believe that programs and activities that involve a high-school/young adult audience are more likely to build a sense of community responsibility and favor democracy than those aimed at established professionals. If we can engage a young Djiboutian in a program that promotes community involvement and social consciousness and at the same time exposes him or her to personal interaction with Americans, we believe that person will more likely develop into an adult who will shoulder seriously his civic responsibilities. The development of a socially conscious youth can contain extremist ideology and serve economic development.

110. (C) We can also engage the country's youth by focusing on training of teachers. The teacher community is a natural bridge to the larger student body. The youth of Djibouti are avid learners, eager to take on new languages and challenges. We must exploit the opportunity presented by this eagerness. It is our expectation that teachers of English, and other subjects, properly trained and motivated, will be able to pass the message of our democratic values to their students.

111. (C) Interagency programming cooperation is also a key aspect of our successes in Djibouti. In working together as a country team to combine resources for programs that might otherwise overlap, we maximize the resources of each agency. Public Diplomacy outreach, combined with USAID education efforts, and Department of Defense civil affairs projects, through CJTF-HOA, have been the Embassy's best tools at our disposal in countering the negative aspects of poverty. CJTF-HOA's particular outreach success in quick impact projects such as well digging, school refurbishment, and clinic reparations has created enormous goodwill for the U.S. in this country. We would like to see these kinds of activities by CJTF-HOA increased. In addition, USAID's cooperation with the Government of Djibouti's Education Ministry in its efforts to nationalize curricula in both private and public schools, including the many Islamic education institutes, is a necessary step toward reaching our target audience. Education programs can address Djibouti's long-term skills needs for both academically educated and vocationally trained youth. As it is often difficult to initiate cooperation with the Islamic schools directly, we believe the best approach to reaching these children and youth is through community activities. We have had success with small-scale programs such as hosting soccer tournaments and Embassy-sponsored essay contests. To have the greatest impact with these small programs, it would be prudent to expand cooperation among agencies and to increase the volume of American individual involvement at a popular level.

12. (C) Skills training will also play an important role in how successful we are in the global war on terrorism. A lack of skilled workers in Djibouti results in poor quality products and a high rate of unemployment. These conditions are a breeding ground for discontent and are easily exploited by those with more narrow agendas. By encouraging economic growth, our aim would be to increase the stake an individual has in his country, thus making it far more difficult for extremist ideology to gain a foothold.

RAGSDALE